The Church Seen as a Living Body, Not an Institution

The Church is seen by God as a family, as a school of disciples, but also as a body in which those born of Him are members of the Body of Christ, being similar to the human body, which we all know is composed of many members closely bound together. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16)

God places the members in the Body of Christ similarly to how He has placed them in the human body; the heart in its place, the pancreas in its place, the nail in its place, each with their functions. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

God does not place any member to grow outside of the body, because, separated from the body, it can have neither life nor growth. Take the kidneys as an example, which cannot have life outside of the body. They are in the body tightly connected to other members from where they receive and give further.

Regarding the human body, it is quite simple. The life of a member is strictly linked to the life of the body. There are no living members that live alone outside of the body.

So it is with the members of the Body of Christ. No member can grow alone, outside the Body of Christ. Whoever believes they can grow without the body and yet reach the stature of the fullness of Christ is deceiving themselves. (Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility...And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Colossians 2:19)

The human body, as well as the Body of Christ, was designed in such a way that every part of the body is useful to another part of the body, no member lives just for itself. (For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Romans 12:4-5; For none of us liveth to himself. Romans 14:7)

The members of the Body of Christ care for one another, each living for the benefit of the others. (God hath tempered the body together…that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Corinthians 12:24-26)

In the Body of Christ, we are closely connected to the members next to us, who in turn are connected to other members, which in turn are tightly connected to other members and so on the whole body is closely connected, fitly joined together. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16)

A very important thing to mention is that God arranges the body, He places the members in the body as He wills. We do not make the choice where to be in the body, but the Lord does this. He knows what each one needs and also knows what each one can give. He will place each one of us in such a way that we receive all that is necessary for growth and for reaching the stature of Christ. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

If we are babes, He will not place us all next to babes, but He will put us next to older brothers/spiritual parents through whom we will be advised, helped to put off lying, stealing, wrath, backbiting, the use of corrupt communication... (And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Romans 15:14)

In this body, closely connected to other members, we learn to put on longsuffering, kindness, to walk in holiness, we learn to forgive, to love, or in other words, we learn to walk after the new things which are of the Spirit.

1. For this reason, the Lord places in His Family spiritual parents, to whom He entrusts children to raise and to keep them from the ravening wolves. (Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28)

2. They are set to be the servants of babes, of children. They must care with a servant's heart so that all may come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. None can be left aside. (But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Matthew 23:11)

Just as natural parents take care of all the needs of their children, so also spiritual parents/elders will take care of all the spiritual needs of the children entrusted to them. (But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. 1 Thessalonians 2:7)

3. They will enroll them as disciples in the school of Christ and will teach them in all things to come unto the measure of the stature of Christ. (Teaching them to observe all

things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:20) They watch/are attentive so that they may grow up healthily. (And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Hebrews 10:24)

4. They will give them work and will help them to put into practice the teachings of the Lord to use them in daily life to be able to discern good from evil. (But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:14) In the Family/Church, children will learn to put away lying, guile, wrath... to renounce the old things; the things of the world. (Colossians 3:8-15)

By following/imitating the example of parents who are victorious through trials, children will also learn to go through the trials of faith. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (Philippians 3:17)

Those who are our parents will oversee how we apply the Lord's teaching in our daily lives. When our rights or what is ours are taken away, we must follow their example and the Lord's and live as He lived. Also in the Family, they will learn to do good, kindness, mercy... by participating in various works together with their parents, by visiting the orphan and the widow, by taking care of the elderly sisters and brothers who are in need. And this can be from small things, such as: shopping, cooking, cleaning, to bedside care. (I was naked and ye clothed me, I was sick, and ye visited me. Matthew 25:36)

It is good to understand the difference between education and upbringing under parental authority. Through preaching, we receive only teaching, not parental upbringing.

We can see how great the difference is when we look at an orphan child and a child who has parents. Both receive education. However, for the child who has parents, in addition to education, they will be there to build his character. They will encourage him in good things and correct him in what he does wrong. In contrast, for the orphan child, if he does wrong, there will be no one beside him to correct him.

We must understand well that we will not be able to grow to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ if we do not have spiritual parents. In Paul's epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, we find their author as an example of a spiritual father. (For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:15)

This post is an excerpt from the booklet "The Church – The Body of Christ", which you can read in full, free of charge. More studies and resources for spiritual awakening are available at https://www.unmodifiedword.com.